CPR Report/Strategic arms talks open after many delays and long debate

by Donald May

On Nov. 17 the United States and Russia are to meet in Helsinki, Finland, for what the State Department calls preliminary talks on the limitation of offensive and defensive nuclear weapons.

Secretary of State William P. Rogers has said the talks will be "exploratory in nature"—to discuss how negotiations could be held later, probably at some other site.

Rogers said: "It's possible it's one of the most important negotiations our country has been involved in." But he cautioned: "We should not confuse the beginning of the talks with success."

Significance

Timing: Past arms talks have dealt with the fringes of the nuclear war problem. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) address the problem itself—how man can first limit, then dismantle, the weaponry which has led him to live under a doctrine which former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara called "assured destruction."

The talks are beginning late. A year ago the weapons experts said the time was ripe for arms talks because the United States and the Soviet Union were approaching rough balance and the next round of the arms race—more difficult to control because of its technology—had not yet begun.

Now the next round has begun. Though it may not be too late, the added problems of which the experts warned are already real.

Agency conflicts: The talks have involved and will continue to involve U.S. government decision-making of the hardest sort. They have already brought into conflict different views and approaches of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), the Defense Department civilians, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the pro-military and anti-military Members of Congress.

Some hard-fought issues have already been settled among these groups. Others have not been and will be pushed to the point of confrontation if the talks progress.

Congressional pressure: On Capitol Hill the talks already have raised a conflict between the need for privacy and security in negotiations and the need for early and continuing consultation with Congress.

The talks are bolstered by the new congressional climate toward military affairs, more antiwar, more hostile toward military priorities, more knowledgeable in the concepts of nuclear strategy, more amenable to notions of nuclear sufficiency rather than superiority. Yet if SALT goes badly, some see the possibility that this climate could be altered by a rising tide of anxiety and a renewal of arms race psychology.

Intelligence: Underlying all that the United States does and says will be the question of evaluating the Russians. So SALT is a supreme challenge to the craft of intelligence and even more importantly to the process by which intelligence is melded into political decisions at the top level of government.

It is also a challenge to those who work in the field of public understanding. For the public is asked to absorb a kind of new mathematics of international thinking—a math in which nuclear war cannot be won, in which defensive weapons can sometimes be as threatening as offensive, in which targeting a city could foster peace (because it deters), and targeting an enemy missile silo could threaten peace (because it may look like an aggressive design to destroy the other side's power to retaliate.)

Outside pressures: Many organizations have become interested in SALT, seeking to shape both public opinion and government policy—foundations, research organizations, peace organizations and church groups.

For the defense industry, now cranked up to produce multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles (MIRVs) and antiballistic missiles (ABMs), SALT could mean sudden readjustment if it achieved startling success.

Background

History: Since 1959 the United States and Russia have agreed to ban nuclear weapons from the Antarctic, outer space and (in a draft treaty) the deep seabed. They agreed to halt nuclear testing except underground and to refrain from giving nuclear weapons technology to other countries.

The story of the attempt to deal with the central problem of nuclear arsenals is one of delays, difficult and much-debated U.S. decisions, missed opportunities and an onrushing arms race.

In 1964 the United States proposed to the Soviets a freeze on the numbers and characteristics of nuclear-armed bombers and missiles. It depended heavily on on-site inspection, something to which the Russians had never agreed. Also, the Russians then were far behind in numbers of weapons, and a freeze may have been much against their interest. They ignored the proposal and kept building.

McNamara's role: In 1966 the United States began privately pressing the Kremlin for nuclear talks. It is one of the ironies of history that the U.S. Government decision to make this initiative apparently was largely due

Milestones on Road Leading to Helsinki

Jan. 27, 1967: President Johnson writes Premier Kosygin proposing talks.

March 2, 1967: Mr. Johnson announces Kosygin's agreement in principle.

Sept. 18, 1967: Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara announces plans to build "Sentinel" ABM.

July 1, 1968: President Johnson announces agreement has been reached to open talks "in the nearest future."

Aug. 15, 1968: First U.S. MIRV test.

Aug. 20, 1968: Soviet troops invade Czechoslovakia. U.S. postpones opening of nuclear talks set for Aug. 21.

March 14, 1969: President Nixon announces decision to deploy modified ABM called Safeguard.

June 19, 1969: President Nixon tells news conference that this country was completing its review of nuclear policy, that it has so informed Russia, and that if Russia agrees, talks might begin by Aug. 15.

Sept. 22, 1969: Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko tells Secretary of State Rogers in New York that a Soviet reply will come "soon."

Oct. 25, 1969: The White House announces agreement to meet in Helsinki.

o the advocacy of a Secretary of Defense—Robert S. McNamara—who had presided over a tripling of U.S. nuclear alert forces since 1961.

McNamara was the "essential ally" of the ACDA, one official recalls. This was an era when the State Department's approach to U.S.-Soviet relations was not to attack the basic national security areas but to search for less significant and easier avenues for what the department called "bridge building."

In early 1967 an exchange of letters between President Johnson and Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin produced agreement in principle for nuclear talks. No negotiations followed. In June of 1967, at the Johnson-Kosygin talks at Glassboro, N.J., McNamara fervently outlined to Kosygin a philosophy of nuclear arms race restraint. There was little, if any, response. On many points, all Kosygin offered—according to one man then in government—was a blank stare.

The Russians continued building toward weapons parity. After another private U.S. appeal for talks, McNamara announced the decision to build a limited ABM system. The U.S. MIRV program moved ahead.

Drafting proposals: Then, in mid-1968, the Russians seemed for the first time serious in wanting to talk. A second agreement in principle to proceed was announced at signing ceremonies of the nonproliferation treaty July 1.

"The U.S. Government wasn't ready for the Russians to say yes," one U.S. official who has since left the government said of that period. During July and August the 1964 freeze proposal was extensively revised in an effort to make it more realistic. The drafting of a new negotiating position was supervised by a now-defunct "Committee of Principals" consisting of the heads of State, Defense, the Joint Chiefs, ACDA, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Central Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Information Agency, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the special assistants to the President for national security and for science and technology. Details of the 1968 negotiating position remain secret to this day. In general, it relied less heavily on on-site inspection, but approached the problem of verification by asking these questions: How could the Russians cheat? If they did cheat, how would that affect the broad nuclear balance? It also took into account improvement in the intervening years in spy satellites and submarine detection.

The generals: One event in the process was crucial.

"The Joint Chiefs went into the tank and came out with a nonrejection," a former official recalls.

On Aug. 15 the United States flight-tested its first MIRV, a Minuteman III fired from Cape Kennedy. There had been a considerable struggle within the government on whether to go ahead with the test. The opening of talks was to have been announced Aug. 21. The talks never took place.

Decision to delay: On Aug. 20 the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia. According to several accounts there was little dissent to the U.S. decision to delay the talks because of the invasion. The reasons urged for delay included a NATO decision to halt all "bridge building" with the Soviets and reluctance of the Democratic Administration to hand candidates Nixon and Wallace a campaign issue of "negotiating with aggressors." Some in government did argue that SALT was so important it should not be affected by the invasion. One senior U.S. diplomat, talking to a reporter at the time, called the SALT delay "excruciating."

If the invasion of Czechoslovakia had not occurred in a U.S. election year, SALT might have started sooner—before the MIRV race had gone as far as it now has. But when Czechoslovakia had receded as an issue the talks were further delayed by the U.S. Presidential campaigns, the election, the transition and the desire of the Nixon Administration to restudy the whole nuclear problem in the context of all other foreign policy problems.

It was June 1969 before the United States was again ready. Then it was October before the Soviets were.

Soviet intentions

Nuclear balance: When the Johnson Administration was winding up its term of office, the U.S.-Soviet nuclear balance, as described by the Pentagon to the American public, was reassuring.

Russia was rapidly catching up with the United States in numbers of launchers for intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). But the National Intelligence Estimate (the consensus of the U.S. intelligence community) predicted that once it caught up it would level off at parity.

The Soviets were behind in nuclear bombers. In ballistic missile submarines they were even farther behind than the statistics indicated. Their first sub comparable to the U.S. Polaris became operational only in 1968. They were just learning the art of submarine deployment over long distances. The Russians had experimented with a Fractional Orbital Bombardment System (FOBS) which looked like a surprise attack weapon. But the Pentagon said it was already developing radars to cancel the surprise factor.

U.S. intelligence did not see signs of Soviet development which would be really threatening—great increases in missile numbers, payload and accuracy which could knock out U.S. missile fields.

All this was consistent with the theory that Russia, like the United States, was operating on the philosophy of deterring nuclear war—that it was not seeking what weapons experts call "first strike capability," the ability to deliver a knock-out blow which destroys the enemy's power of retaliation.

Laird's view: Then—almost overnight it seemed—the new Secretary of Defense, Melvin R. Laird, was up before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (May 21), selling the ABM, and saying that the Russians "are going for a first strike capability." He added: "There is no question about that."

The statement plunged Laird into a confrontation with Sen. J.W. Fulbright, D-Ark., who sought to elicit a different answer from CIA director Richard M. Helms. But the public record was left unclear by the security deletion of virtually all of Helms' testimony.

The issue is important to SALT for this reason: If the Russians do indeed have a vastly different philosophy of nuclear weapons from the United States—if they do not buy the basic theory of mutual deterrence—then the task of SALT could be much more difficult.

Intelligence delay: Laird based his assessment on intelligence information that the Soviets were building many more SS9 missiles, capable of destroying U.S. ICBMs, than were needed for deterrence.

That intelligence began to come in during the final months of the last

Administration, but was still not fully evaluated when the Administrations changed.

Sources familiar with more recent intelligence say the facts of the SS9 buildup have since been well confirmed. One who personally feels Laird was on somewhat shaky factual ground in May says: "What began as rhetoric has become real." The significance of the buildup is still debated.

"From a Russian point of view it makes sense only in terms of first-strike capability," according to a Pentagon official. ACDA officials are more willing to believe other explanations are plausible—for example, that the Kremlin may simply not share the Pentagon's view as to what is needed for deterrence; that the SS9s are bargaining chips for SALT; or even that the Kremlin has been sold a bill of goods by its missile experts.

ACDA and the Pentagon

David and Goliath: The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, created by Congress in 1961, has a staff of a little over 200, compared with the Defense Department's 1 million civilians and 3 million military. ACDA's annual budget is $10 million, an amount which the Pentagon—with a budget of almost $80 billion—considers so trivial it is rounded off in Pentagon budget estimates.

The ACDA argued that the ABM, and especially the MIRV, proposals were not in the interests of arms control.

Some ACDA officials regard the Defense Department as a classic villain. Some defense officials argue that the ACDA does not know enough about the weapons it wants to control.

For example, when the ACDA talked of seeking a ban on the testing of MIRVs, the Pentagon came back with a long list of ways in which the Soviets could cheat.

Simplicity vs. complexity: "The Pentagon wins arguments because the State Department and ACDA are sloppy," says one admittedly defense-oriented expert.

"ACDA," he continued, "believes deterrence is simple and that therefore arms control is relatively simple. Defense thinks both deterrence and arms control are very complex. It always brings up the complexities."

A knowledgeable student of the subject who watches the process from a staff job on Capitol Hill sees "overemphasis on complexity" as a prime obstacle to success of SALT and as an important public issue.

"You cannot in a political process—and nuclear arms control is a political process—deal with every single parameter, every single problem," he said. "You have to deal with the important ones and admit that you're taking some risk."

Still another ex-official suggests that the ACDA, though it no longer has a McNamara, has more influence of its own under the Nixon Administration than in the last.

"Before," he said, "the big decisions were made over tuna fish sandwiches (at White House Tuesday lunches), and ACDA wasn't there. Now with the new Administration's emphasis on machinery, ACDA chairs the meetings and handles the studies."

Congressional role

New climate: "There is a new political climate," said a congressional staff man. "You find more sophistication. Security and safety in the 20th century, given the kinds of weapons we have, don't mean what they used to when we just had navies and armies. It has required thinking about it in different ways." He himself typified a new kind of staff aide found in more and more Capitol Hill offices—a thorough student of nuclear strategy, fluent in the strategic jargon of "damage limitation" and "counter-force," with volumes of Herman Kahn on his shelf.

Yet the visitor to the Capitol sees gaps. As far as he can discern, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, though it quizzed Laird on Soviet intentions during the ABM debate, has been consulted by the Administration only to a minor extent on the preparations for SALT, nor has it asked to be consulted in detail. "The committee," said an aide, "has asked to be kept informed."

U.S. Negotiating Team For Strategic Arms Talks

Gerard C. Smith, 55, chairman of the delegation with rank of ambassador. Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency since Feb. 7, 1969. Adviser to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles on atomic affairs. Special adviser on multilateral force negotiations 1962-64. Credited by President Kennedy with making the first proposal for the Washington-Moscow "hot line."

Philip J. Farley, 53, alternate delegation head. Deputy director of ACDA. Staff man for disarmament and test ban talks 1957-60. Later special assistant to the Secretary of State for atomic energy, political adviser to the U.S. representative to NATO, deputy assistant secretary of state for politico-military affairs.

Paul H. Nitze, 62, currently chairman of the advisory council, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. Since 1945, when he was vice chairman of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, which evaluated the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he has been deeply involved in nuclear weapons planning and control. Assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs 1961-63. Secretary of the Navy 1963-67. Deputy secretary of defense 1967 to January 1969.

Harold Brown, 42. Ph.D. in physics at Columbia University in 1949 Director of the famed Livermore Laboratory, Calif., 1960. Director of defense research and engineering in the Pentagon 1961-65. Secretary of the Air Force 1965 to February 1969. Frequent writer on nuclear strategy. In *Foreign Affairs,* April 1969, he suggested that MIRV could be controlled by limiting the numbers and sizes of missiles, without need to inspect their insides.

Llewellyn E. Thompson, 65. U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1957-62 and again from 1966-68. A career foreign service officer since 1929.

Maj. Gen. Royal B. Allison, 50. Air Force pilot. Currently number two man in the special studies group of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff which analyzes nuclear and conventional forces.

Private talks: Contrary to past practice, there are no congressional observers to the Helsinki talks.

Secretary of State William P. Rogers emphasized in a news conference Oct. 25 that as far as public discussion was concerned, "We're going to try as much as possible to conduct these negotiations in private." But he said: "We will keep Congress advised, and we will keep the appropriate committees fully advised of the general approach that our government is taking."

"I would fully expect that we would want to be and would be kept fully informed by the Administration on the progress of the SALT talks," said Rep. John B. Anderson, R-Ill., a member of the Joint Atomic Energy Committee.

MIRV: SALT was in the background of the ABM debate in Congress, but it has been MIRV that most recently and most sharply has focused Capitol Hill attention on the talks.

On June 17 Sen. Edward W. Brooke, R-Mass., and 39 colleagues introduced a resolution to express the sense of the Senate that the President should "urgently propose" to the Soviet Union an "immediate suspension" of MIRV flight tests by both countries "subject to national verification or such other measures of observation and inspection as may be appropriate." In the House 113 Members sponsored similar resolutions.

Brooke's argument: Since the Russians were unlikely ever to let inspectors open the nose cones of missiles, Brooke argued, the last chance to halt MIRV might well be to stop testing before either side had tested MIRVs enough to have confidence to deploy them. He contended that an interim MIRV test ban would "buy time" for SALT but that a long-range agreement including MIRV would have to cover launchers, ABMs and antisubmarine weapons as well.

John S. Foster Jr., director of defense research and engineering in the Pentagon, replied that the Russians could conduct sneak MIRV tests, that elementary cluster warheads and ABMs must be somehow covered, that a quick MIRV test ban would lack safeguards but would tend to perpetuate itself as a dangerous precedent—but that MIRV was a reasonable subject for negotiation in SALT.

The positions of the two men were not as far apart as press accounts at the time made them appear. The essential difference was that Brooke wanted to extract MIRV as one subject needing urgent, separate and early attention, while Foster argued that treating MIRV alone would not add to world security.

Subsequently both President Nixon and Secretary Rogers said MIRV was indeed a subject to take up in SALT. Anti-MIRV forces hoped that the United States would at least ask the Russians in Helsinki whether they were interested in a MIRV test ban. If the answer were "yes," the Administration would face a decision. But according to one press report (The *Washington Post*, Nov. 11), the President has decided against a MIRV test ban.

Meanwhile, more and more of the experts feel that the MIRV clock has ticked pretty long for a test ban to have meaning. Foster has testified that MIRV tests will be completed next May, with deployment soon thereafter.

Outside pressures

Peace groups: "The peace groups," observes one U.S. official, "have not focused yet on SALT. The nuclear test ban was in large part the product of outside pressure (fear of contamination). I wouldn't say there's any pressure for SALT except government. The peace groups are focused on Vietnam and military spending."

Other groups: Nevertheless, a host of groups have interested themselves in the issues of nuclear war:

- **Members of Congress for Peace through Law,** founded in 1959 by then Sen. Joseph S. Clark, D-Pa. (1957-69), consists of 24 Senators and 63 Representatives of both parties and has a small office near the Capitol. In June it petitioned President Nixon to postpone MIRV tests (signed by 56 legislators). In July it published a study report on military spending. It has an arms control committee which as yet has not been active. Its chairman is Rep. F. Bradford Morse, R-Mass.
- **The Coalition on National Priorities and Military Policy,** headed by former Sen. Clark, calls itself a "coordinating body for national religious, peace, liberal, labor and scientific organizations which seek to reverse the militarization of America's policies and resources." It assembles the talents of affiliated groups and sends joint lobbying missions to legislators' offices and hearings.
- **The Democratic Study Group,** a loose grouping of liberal Members of the House (see p. 103 for complete profile), has provided research for Members of Congress interested in nuclear issues. It published a "fact book" on the ABM last June.
- **The Democratic Policy Council,** headed by former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, and formed after Humphrey's Presidential defeat to generate ideas for the party, has a Committee on Arms Control, chaired by Paul C. Warnke, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.
- **The National Council of Churches** has issued position papers on arms control. Protestant and Roman Catholic churches sponsored a meeting in St. Louis, Mo., Oct. 3-7 which brought together U.S. and Soviet clergymen to discuss arms control.

Research groups: The policy research organizations are busy advising both the government and the public:

- **The Rand Corp.** was expected to have a consultant with the U.S. delegation in Helsinki.
- **The Hudson Institute** in Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y., headed by Herman Kahn, has assembled staff member views in a book timed for the ABM debate (*Why ABM*, Pergamon Press).
- **The Brookings Institution and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** set up earlier this year a study group on the problem of nuclear weapons including members from inside and outside the government. It is headed by Harold Brown, one of the SALT negotiators.

Industry: Some 20 percent of U.S. Defense Department procurement is in the field of strategic forces—nuclear weapons aimed at Russia and China and defenses against nuclear attack from Russia.

Some 15,000 persons are estimated to be working directly on the ABM program in the defense industry. Western Electric Co. and six principal subcontractors are involved in ABM. But when the list of ABM subcontractors is broadened to include the vendors of nuts and bolts and wires and sheet metal, the number of firms involved reaches about 5,000.

At least 50 major contractors and subcontractors are involved in the Minuteman missile program and

about the same number in the Polaris-Poseidon submarine missile programs.

An examination of the Pentagon's list of the 100 top defense contractors shows that 33 of them are involved in the Minuteman, Polaris-Poseidon or ABM programs.

Industry influence: During the recent ABM debate, some opponents argued that ABM should be delayed a year to see what happened in SALT. The Pentagon argued that this would mean disbanding the "industry team" and that if a decision were then made to proceed with ABM it would take a year to rebuild that team. It is thus clear that the arms race has a powerful momentum in industry behind it, which is recognized by the Pentagon. Even if nobody in industry argues that disarmament is bad for business, this momentum tends to keep the arms race moving at a pace that is hard for the arms controllers to keep up with.

One arms control expert interviewed by the *National Journal* expressed concern that industry men who advise the Pentagon are exerting an influence in the direction of technological supercaution, by presenting what he figuratively called "the Russians are testing behind the moon arguments."

A defense official said industry is called on for both technical and policy advice. Firms—some of them involved in strategic weapons programs—are asked for technical answers in their fields of expertise. Also, a Defense Science Board, composed of scientists and engineers, advises the Pentagon on policy matters.

Outlook

Two possibilities: There are two main ways in which SALT could achieve some result. One would be a formal agreement, but reaching one could be long and difficult. The other would be that the mere process of talks between the nations could lead to a closer understanding of each other's nuclear philosophy and to a mutual restraint in the arms race—a sort of unwritten understanding.

The arms race will be hard to turn off because of its momentum. It is a race in which each side hedges against the worst possible situation with which it might be confronted. It is a race in which each side runs, not to keep ahead of where the other is now, but to keep ahead of where the other will be five or 10 years from now.

Pressure for progress: There are many reasons why SALT should succeed. There is the fact which should be obvious to both sides that it is a race that brings no added security. The economic incentive for each country to stop racing is considerable. The United States, its domestic programs being advocated with new urgency, looks forward to reduced Vietnam war costs ahead, but sees the possible saving being gobbled up by aircraft, ship and missile programs deferred by that war.

The Soviets have undertaken an extremely costly race to catch up in nuclear weapons and perhaps try to go beyond. Both countries spend about 10 per cent of their gross national products on defense. But because the U.S. economy is twice as big it can better afford it. Soviet military and space programs consume a higher percentage of Russia's advanced technology and skilled manpower than comparable programs do in the United States.

Pitfalls: There are possible reasons why SALT may not work. One possibility is that the Soviet Union really does have a first-strike philosophy. Another is that the Russians, despite their SS9s, still have a nuclear inferiority complex and want to catch up with MIRVs similar to those the United States is developing. Still another is that a fear expressed by a Capitol Hill staff man could prove true:

"The Pentagon doesn't want to stop here," he said; "it wants to go up onto the MIRV plateau and negotiate from there."

Election results

New Orleans mayoralty primary: Former city councilman James E. Fitzmorris and current city council president Moon Landrieu will compete in a Dec. 13 runoff for the Democratic nomination to succeed retiring Mayor Victor Schiro, D. Fitzmorris and Landrieu led 11 other candidates in the Nov. 8 Democratic primary. The winner of the Dec. 13 runoff will face Ben Toledano, R, an attorney, in the April 7, 1970, general election. Complete but unofficial returns:

Fitzmorris	59,946	34.5%
Landrieu	33,554	19.3
Others	80,427	46.2
Total	173,927	

Ohio voting age referendum: Ohio voters Nov. 4 turned down a proposal that would lower the minimum voting age in that state from 21 to 19. Complete but unofficial returns: For 1,218,175 (48.0 per cent); Against 1,317,422 (52.0 per cent).

New Jersey 8th District: A recount conducted Nov. 12 gave former New Jersey Conservation Commissioner Robert A. Roe, D, 45, a 960-vote victory over Gene Boyle, R, a Clifton restaurant manager. Roe will succeed former U.S. Rep. Charles S. Joelson, D (1961-69), who resigned Sept. 4 to become a state superior court judge. *(See p. 97.)*

Candidate announcements

Connecticut Senate election: The Rev. Joseph D. Duffey, 47, national chairman of the Americans for Democratic Action, announced Nov. 10 that he would oppose Sen. Thomas J. Dodd, D, 62, for renomination in 1970. Duffey headed Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy's, D-Minn., 1968 Presidential campaign in Connecticut. Duffey is the first Democratic opponent to announce against Dodd.

Ohio Senate election: Gov. James A. Rhodes, R, 59, barred from a third consecutive term as Governor, announced Nov. 6 that he would seek the Republican nomination to succeed retiring Sen. Stephen M. Young, D-Ohio, 80, in 1970. Rhodes may face opposition for the Republican nomination from U.S. Reps. Robert Taft Jr., 52, Donald E. Lukens, 38, or John M. Ashbrook, 41.